given a finding that Dr. Rakesh Saxena received adequate encouragement and help from his colleagues and seniors in the discharge of his duties.

The police has registered a case and investigations are not yet completed.

Acquisition of Westland Helicopters

1239. SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to refer to the answer to Starred Question 188 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 13th May, 1985 and state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister had stated that the Government would not purchase (Westland Helicopters) from Britain due to certain technical defects in them and high costs of their running and maintenance;

(b) if so, the reasons for purchasing these helicopters later on and the number of helicopters purchased and at what cost;

(c) the facts regarding their high cost of maintenance and running and technical defects as per experience by Pawan Hans, which has got a fleet of Westland helicopters in India; and

(d) the maximum time per day for which a Westland helicopter can be flown and actual average time per day for which it has been used as yet and the reasons for low utility period ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : (a) and (b) At that time, the Prime Minister had expressed certain reservations regarding the capability of Westland helicopter to cater to the specific requirements of the oil sector and their being more expensive.

However, the subsequent flight tests carried out by experts cleared the Westland helicopters on the ground of 'zero risk' factor in the event of single engine failure during take off and pay load penalty. The higher operational cost was also off set by the grant of one-time lump sum operating subsidy of £ 10 million.

An agreement for the purchase of 21 Westland helicopters along with spare engines, engine spares and ground handling and test equipment, etc. at a total cost of £ 70 million, has been signed.

(c) Even though the Pawan Hans have had some teething problems on the induction of Westland helicopters into service, the same are not considered alarming. The costs of maintenance due to technical defects attributable to quality of material or manufacture defects are covered by the warranty clause in the purchase agreement.

(d) Presently, the Westland helicopters have been placed on lease with Oil Companies/State Governments by the Pawan Hans. The actual hours flown by these helicopters depend on the nature of operation, terrain, availability of crew and flight and duty time limitations etc. Depending upon the requirements, these helicopters have flown as much as seven hours in a day.

Abolition of octroi

1240. SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether all the State Governments have agreed on the abolition of octroi, one time payment of road-tax for vehicles and establishment of a National Highway Authority; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the mechanics of the same and the State-wise progress so far made in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT) : (a) and (b) The Transport Development Council has in its recent meeting held on 8th September, 1987, reiterated its recommendation to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations to abolish Octroi. The Council also urged for introduction of, by all the States Union Territory Administrations, a system of levy of one-time taxation on personalized vehicles, by 1-4-1988.

As of today, Octroi is not levied in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maha-